

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 2- Luke 2:21-40** 25- The Four Witnesses- Part 2

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Luke 2:21-40

Now last week I was showing you how that Luke- the Gentile Physician who wrote this Gospel Account- wanted to make sure that he had corroborating witnesses to all of the fantastic claims that he has made so far in the Story of Salvation. So he goes about in this section of **Luke 2** to give us four eyewitnesses as to the fact that Jesus- the Son of Mary is, in fact, Jesus- the Messiah- the long awaited Deliverer of God's people, and that He is Jesus- the Son of David- the legal heir to the throne of King David, and that He is Jesus- the Son of Man- born of a woman and fully human, and that He is Jesus- the Son of God- Immanuel- God Almighty- manifested in human flesh and fully Deity.

Now as you will remember- Luke wrote a very thoroughly researched and documented 2 Volume Treatise to prove beyond any doubt that what we believe about Jesus is, in fact, true. So Luke wrote this Gospel Account named after him and then he wrote the Diary of the Church- called **The Acts of the Apostles**- and he wrote this 2 volume work to a young Roman dignitary named Theophilus so that this man might have confidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the savior of the world.

So as a very thorough historian- Luke carefully documents all that he says about Jesus so that our Faith will not stand in the wisdom of men- but in the power of God. So we have come to a place in this Story of Salvation where Luke has already made some amazing claims about this Man named Jesus. Luke has testified that Jesus is the Messiah- Who has over 400 very detailed prophecies about Him in the Old Testament. Luke has already testified that after 400 years of silence- God sent the angel Gabriel to an old priest named Zacharias to announce the birth of a son- from his old barren wife Elizabeth- who

would grow to be the greatest prophet born of woman- John the Baptist. Luke went into great detail about that event- even giving us insight into the godly character of both Zacharias and his wife- Elizabeth, and showing us how that the angel judged Zacharias because he did not believe.

Luke then goes into great detail about the greatest miracle that the world has ever seen- the moment when the Owner and the Creator of the Universe inserted Himself into His Own Creation by taking on human flesh and by the Power of the Holy Ghost placing Himself into the womb of a virgin named Mary in the form of a baby boy.

And Luke carefully documented for us how that both Mary and her fiancé Joseph were direct descendants of King David, and that they were both righteous people.

Luke then gives us the information surrounding the pagan Emperor- who called for a census and how Herod- the non-Jewish ruler of Palestine forced Joseph and Mary to take that 90-mile trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem at just the right time so that at the very moment that Mary delivered her first born Son- they would be in the city of David- fulfilling a 800 year old prophecy about the Messiah.

Then Luke gives us the breathtaking account of how God caters to the weak and the lowly and the poor by telling us about how an angel appeared to a group of low life and unimportant shepherds announcing the birth of the Savior, and how the Heavens exploded with a Heavenly Host praising God and saying in **Luke 2:14:**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.

And we also saw that that phrase is literally translated from the Greek as:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

or:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men of God's good pleasure."

Or to put it another way:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those to whom it pleases God to give peace."

And Luke gave us the words of the angel- which he no doubt got from interviewing those shepherds as the angel told them the greatest words that any sinful human being could ever hear from God found in **Luke 2:11:**

"...for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

The angel told these shepherds that Jesus was going to save them- that unto them as born a Savior. And Luke was careful to tell us that Jesus saves people from their sins, that by and through His sinless life and His Death, Burial, and Resurrection- Jesus rescues people from the Wrath of God, that He delivers unworthy sinners from the Fury of a Righteous God against our many sins, that He delivers lost man who are sons of the fallen Adam from eternal damnation.

That Jesus is *not* going to save them from the pagan Romans, and Jesus is *not* going to rescue them from low expectations as Robert Schuler teaches, and Jesus is *not* going to deliver them from having a bad hair day or of being in a dead end job or of not having enough money or so they can get more earthly possessions as the false prophets teach in our day, that Jesus is *not* going to provide a way for every sick person to be healed or for every poor person to be rich or for every person of low estate to be made a king- but that Jesus is going to save and rescue and deliver unworthy and undeserving sinners from their sins.

And the only people who are thrilled by the Good News are the people who are blessed by God to have eyes to see their own sinfulness, and those who have ears to hear the Sound of Amazing Grace, and those who have been given a heart to fear God and to believe.

So Luke tells us that the shepherds ran to Jesus and they found Him exactly as the angel told them He would be- wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a horse trough. The Creator of the Universe was lying in a horse trough!

So now we come to the place where Luke sees the need of giving Theophilus and all of those who read his Story of Salvation corroborating witness of all that he has testified thus far.

And testimony that is this powerful and this fantastic, and testimony that demands such a response from all of Mankind needs to be confirmed. And so in this section- Luke brings in the testimony of witnesses. And there are not two or even three witnesses to what Luke has testified about this Child- but there are four:

1. There is the testimony of Joseph and Mary- the parents' testimony.
2. There is the testimony of a man named Simeon.
3. There is the testimony of a woman named Anna.
4. There is the testimony of God Himself.

Four testimonies are given- four eyewitness confirmations are given as to the identity of this Child. And so the rest of **Luke 2** confirms the credibility of Luke's testimony that this Child is indeed the Messiah- the Son of God, the anointed Christ, and the Savior of the world.

And as I told you last week that there's something you always want to know about a witness. The only thing that matters about a witness is whether or not they are honest. How much money they make or how tall they are- or even what their educational level is- is not a concern. But if they are unreliable, if they are untrustworthy- then their testimony is meaningless. So you want to know that a person who is testifying is honest and so you want some kind of indication as to their character. And so Luke is very careful in this passage to let us know that the witnesses that are called to give affirming testimony to Jesus Christ are indeed righteous people. They are all very credible witnesses precisely because they are righteous. So we can believe their testimony because of the character of their lives.

And so we find here that Luke gives much information about the character of all of these witnesses.

And so the first thing that Luke wants us to understand is about the character of the parents of Jesus. And we already know that Joseph was a righteous man because in **Matthew 1:19** it says very clearly,

"Joseph her husband, being a righteous man." And that is to say he was right with God- that's what this means- Joseph was right with God.

And we also know that Mary was righteous because of what Luke said came out of her mouth in **Luke 1:46**- when she said,

46 "My soul exalts the Lord,

47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

48 "For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.

49 "For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.

50 "AND HIS MERCY IS UPON GENERATION AFTER GENERATION TOWARD THOSE WHO FEAR HIM.

51 "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart.

52 "He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

53 "HE HAS FILLED THE HUNGRY WITH GOOD THINGS; And sent away the rich empty-handed.

54 "He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy,

55 As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever."

... so we know that Mary was a righteous girl.

And so last week I went into great detail showing you that five times in this morning's passage- Luke tells us that both Joseph and Mary proved their love and devotion to God by obeying what God had required of His people in the Law:

Luke 2:22a says that Mary waited until her time of purification was finished in obedience to the Law

Luke 22b-&23 says that both Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem into the Temple to be given to God in accord with what God had commanded in the Law

Luke 2:24 says that Jesus' parents offered two turtle doves or two young pigeons as an offering to God in the Temple at Jerusalem in accord with what God commanded in the Law

And then in **Luke 2:27& 39** Luke repeats his statement about their obedience in order to cause their godly character to bear heavily on our minds.

And I was also going over just why Jesus had to be circumcised on the eighth day and why He was baptized at 30 years of age- even though Jesus was perfectly sinless. Jesus had to perfectly and continuously obey all of His Father's Commands that are found in the Law so that He could develop that spotless Righteousness that the law promised to all who obeyed.

And the reason that Jesus had to develop His Own Personal Righteousness is because it takes that Righteousness for us to be able to go to Heaven.

We are wondrously forgiven by the shed Blood of Jesus on the Cross, and without that forgiveness- nobody could ever be saved. But if all that we receive was forgiveness- nobody could go to Heaven- because we need to not only be forgiven- but we also need to be made righteous.

You see once we sin- the moment that we commit our very first sin- we are not only sinful- but we are also unrighteous. And the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ washes all of our sins away and forever satisfies the Justice of God so that the Fury of God's Wrath against our sins is settled by pouring all of that Wrath on Jesus.

So now we are forgiven- but since we did sin and since we still do sin- we are still unrighteous. And we must understand that God's requirement for anyone to go to Heaven is that they be as Righteous as God Himself is Righteous. Close doesn't count- this isn't horseshoes and "leaners" don't count. You are either perfectly and continuously righteous or you do not go to Heaven.

So there are only two possibilities for us to become Righteous in God's sight.

One is that we must do something ourselves to develop our own personal righteousness so that our own inherent righteousness rises to the level of being just like God- perfectly and continuously sinless. And the various false religions and human philosophies of the world have a long list that they will be happy to share with you to show you just how to do that.

For example- the false religion of Islam teaches that all evil deeds are a minus and all good deeds are a plus. So at the end of the day- if

your plusses outweigh your minuses- then you are righteous. Sort of. Kind of- but not quite because there are some very notable exceptions.

For example in the false religion of Islam- even if your plusses outweigh your minuses- you are still unrighteous if by accident somebody went to the bathroom on you or if you accidentally touched a dead person or if somebody stole something and hid it in your house- even if you didn't know about it- you are unrighteous. And Islam even has another exception because their god- Allah- is a very fickle god and sometimes he's in a bad mood and so the Koran teaches that even if your plusses outweigh your minuses- you are still unrighteous if Allah just doesn't like you.

So after all is said and done the only real way that anybody who follows the demonic religion of Islam can know for sure if they are righteous enough to go to Heaven is if they blow themselves up in a legally declared Jihad.

Now Hinduism has a unique way for its followers to become righteous enough to go to Heaven. They have all kinds of rules and regulations and certain prayers and deeds that a follower must do- but they have a clause that says if you don't get it right and you die- don't worry because you will come back to this earth as a cow or a pig or a gnat or a bug and you will keep on recycling your many, many lives until you can finally become righteous enough to go to Heaven.

Which is very similar to what the false religion of Roman Catholicism teaches. Rome teaches that you begin your journey to make yourself righteous enough to go to Heaven with infant baptism and then by partaking of communion and attending mass and by faithfully going to confession your entire life- and by partaking of the Rite of Penance- where you can get your Salvation back after you lost it by committing mortal sins- and you will gradually work your way up the ladder until you die in which case you go to Purgatory where all remaining sin is purge away and the pope then can make a withdrawal out of the Treasury of Merit - which is the Heavenly Bank- where all of the excess righteousness of all the saints was deposited- and after only a few hundred thousand years in Purgatory- you can then go to Heaven- if, of course, Mary has bestowed enough Grace on you.

Which leads us to the Pentecostal/Charismatic/Full Gospel/Latter Rain religion which teaches the same thing as Rome teaches about

venial and mortal sins, only they don't have Purgatory in which case if you die in between being lost and saved- you just go to Hell.

And I could go into basically the same thing with Judaism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Buddhists, and Materialism.

Now listen to me dear friends- I am not just bashing these religions- that is not what my purpose is by telling you this. I fully realize that there are many very sincere people who are involved in these false religions- working very hard- struggling to become righteous enough to go to Heaven- which is why we need to know the Truth so we can pray for them and love them and be merciful to them and show them the Truth about being Righteous.

The one common thread which runs through all man-made religions and human philosophies is that they all teach the very same thing about how a sinner is made righteous. They all teach that man has to do something either by himself in his own will power and strength or with God's help- to develop his own personal intrinsic righteousness to the point where he is good enough to go to Heaven.

And the second thing that is common with all of those who follow these false systems is that nobody knows for sure if they have accomplished the goal. Nobody in any of these man-made systems ever knows whether God is fully pleased with them and nobody ever one time has the assurance of Salvation.

And inside all of these systems- the people migrate into one of two positions. They either become self-righteous and self-deceived like the Pharisees in the sense that they don't think that their own personal sins matter to God anymore, or they lose all hope and they descend in total despair realizing that no matter how hard they try- they still sin.

Which is why nobody ever knows for sure if they ever reach the goal that they are working so hard to reach- perfect and continuous righteousness.

So even though the Blood of Jesus has washed us and God's Wrath against our sins was poured out on Jesus and we are forgiven- we still need to be made righteous if we hope to enter into Heaven.

So in Biblical Christianity and only in Biblical Christianity- God takes the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ that Jesus literally earned by never sinning one time and God imputes or credits that Righteousness to the forgiven soul who has been washed in the Blood of

Jesus and God declares that sinful person to be just as Righteous as Jesus is.

So unlike the false religions- the righteousness that allows saved people to go to Heaven is not their own personal righteousness, it never belongs to them, it is an alien or a foreign Righteousness that belongs to Jesus, and has only been imputed to them by the agency of Faith alone and not by keeping sacraments or by being baptized or by speaking in tongues or by any human activity.

And that is why we need both the spotless Blood of Jesus that was shed on Calvary's Cross and that is why we need the perfect Righteousness that Jesus developed by living 33 years on earth without sin. We need them both and that is why Jesus was circumcised and that is why Jesus was baptized and that is why Jesus had to be born as a human and live life on this earth for 33 years. Please turn with me to read **Galatians 4:4-5**:

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

The Bible says that Jesus was born of a woman, born under the law. And His parents took Him and they had Him circumcised. Now at the point that they had Jesus circumcised Luke tells us in Luke 2:21 "His name was then called Jesus." So apparently it was at the circumcision that they did the official naming- and they called Him Jesus.

Now that wasn't a hard choice for them to make because that was the name given by the angel before He was ever conceived in the womb. You remember in **Matthew 1:21** that Joseph was approached by an angel in a dream and the angel said, "**She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.**"

And Mary was approached by the same angel- Gabriel, and she is told the very same thing. **Luke 1:31** says:

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.

And we know that the name "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Hebrew name "Y'shua", which means: Yahweh saves; God saves.

Now if you remember- we saw that naming and circumcision went together when John the Baptist was born back in **Luke 1:59-63**, and here we see it again with Jesus. That was the Jewish custom that both the naming and the circumcision occurred at the same time on the eighth day of Jesus' human life.

And so they gave Him the name "Yahweh saves." And the Old Testament equivalent to the name "Y'shua" is "Joshua". And you can read **Numbers 13:16** where it says Joshua's name was changed from Hoshea to Joshua, and he was named "Jehovah saves." And it's that same name. And Joshua was a deliverer, wasn't he? He led the people of Israel into the conquering of the promised land. But Jesus is a greater deliverer than Joshua because Jesus doesn't save people in giving them real estate- Jesus saves people from the Wrath of God brought on by their sins.

Now I resent the fact that some people teach that God is a reluctant Savior. He is not reluctant at all. God is a Savior by Nature. The Bible says in **1Timothy 2:4**:

...who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It is not foreign to the Nature of God to save. Look at the great length that God is going here for Jesus to be born. All the angelic visitations, all the Heavenly signs, all the events that are transpiring so that Jesus would be born to parents who were in the genealogy of David in the city of David.

And one of the great travesties that's perpetrated upon the world of Christianity today, and has been perpetrated through the centuries by the Roman Catholic Church in saying that God is a reluctant Savior, that God is a tough guy, that God is a hard guy, that He's full of Justice and Wrath and Vengeance and Fury and Anger, and that you really don't want to go to Him- you don't want to go to God- you don't want to ask God for Salvation because He really might refuse you.

So they teach that Jesus is not quite as tough as God- but He's still pretty tough. So you really don't want to go directly to Jesus either because, you know, Jesus can be very firm and very, very strong, and He, too, pronounces judgment. So if you really want Salvation under

the false Roman system- there's one soft person, one tender, gentle, meek, soft person you can go to- Mary. And the idea is that you go to Mary first and Mary just falls in line because she's gentle and sweet and she's easily entreated and you go to Mary. And then you tell Mary this...you say, *"Hail, Mary, full of grace...plead for us sinners now and at the hour of our need."* And so you butter Mary up with your pleases and you get Mary to be on your side, and then she goes in and she tries to soften up Jesus and the theology is that Jesus can't resist His own mother- so He caves in and He pleads with the Father and God finally caves in and you can maybe get to heaven that way.

But you really never know until you die, and then you might find yourself in Purgatory because not enough pleading was done. So while you're in Purgatory, some people up here can light candles and they can keep begging Mary who keeps begging Jesus who keeps begging God until finally after eons have gone by and maybe somebody else's treasury of merit, some good deeds from somebody else have been stuck in your account, you might get to Heaven- maybe.

And the whole Roman system is predicated on the false notion that God is not by Nature a saving God, and all I'm saying is that that is NOT true. Thank God that's not true.

In **Jeremiah 13**- you see tears running down the eyes of Jeremiah and Jeremiah is weeping the tears of God over Israel's unbelief. And you go in to the gospel of **Matthew** and you see Jesus sitting over the city of Jerusalem and He's weeping the tears of God as they run down His cheeks and He's saying,

"I wanted to gather you but you wouldn't do it."

I tell you that there is no religion in the world with a Savior except Christianity. All the gods of the nations are either apathetic and don't care one whit about us, or they are vicious and hostile toward us. But our God is the kind of God depicted in the prodigal son story, when the sinner comes home, when the son comes back, the father doesn't say, *"Hey, you're not getting in here that easy. Are you kidding me? Look what you've done, you've been out there messing around doing all that stuff, wasted your opportunity, don't expect to come back here and get what you might have had if you had been obedient."*

That's not the way it goes at all. What happens is the son is coming, the father sees him from far off. You know why the father saw him from afar? Because the Father was looking for him to come home, that's why. And the old man runs out there as fast as he can and he falls on his neck and starts kissing him, and he calls for the ring to be put on his finger and the best robe to be put on his body and the biggest party they ever had.

That's the attitude of God toward a repentant sinner because God is by Nature a Savior. Jehovah saves and if you have any question about that at all- then remember Jesus' words in **Luke 19:10**:

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

So you name this child "Jesus" because that's His Nature to save. And they both knew Who this Child was. They circumcised Him because that's what the Law required and they named Him because that's what the angel required. And they, therefore, give testimony to the fact that this is Jehovah Who saves, this is God in human flesh. And they both knew that He was the Son of the Most High God. Mary had been told that by Gabriel. They knew the Child was God in human flesh and they knew He was the Savior and that's how they named Him. And there is affirming testimony to Who this Child was by this righteous young couple.

But there's a second part of the testimony of Mary and Joseph. And it starts in **Luke 2:22-24**. And this is really fascinating. Read it with me:

22 And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord

23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY *firstborn* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD"),

24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, "A PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS."

Notice two words there in verse 22- "purification" and "present."

The first testimony of Mary and Joseph came in them circumcision and naming Jesus. But the second testimony from these parents comes

in the purification and presenting. And this is a fascinating thing. This, too, is according to the Law of Moses, or as it's called in verse 23 the Law of the Lord, verse 24, the Law of the Lord, and verse 39, the Law of the Lord. Joseph and Mary were just functioning according to the Law and beyond, as I'll point out.

Now it says in verse 22:

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord

So two things had to happen in Jewish law. First of all, a mother who had birthed a child had to go through a purification ceremony. Secondly, any firstborn male child had to be given to the Lord. Now what is interesting is that they didn't have to go to the Temple in Jerusalem to do this- that was over and above the normal obedience- and I'll explain that in a minute. But those two things had to happen. There had to be a purification and a presenting. And there were some days that had to be completed before the purification could actually happen.

Now let's turn to **Leviticus 12:1-5**:

1 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

2 “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: ‘When a woman gives birth and bears a male *child*, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean.

3 On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

4 Then she shall remain in the blood of *her* purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed.

5 But if she bears a female *child*, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of *her* purification for sixty-six days.

Now remember, you've had the entire Law of God summed up in two statements, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself." That was the sum of all the Law- perfect love toward God and perfect love toward Man.

Then you had it expanded in the Ten Commandments. And then you had it expanded even more into the full Mosaic Law. But that's the full Law- summed up in the Ten Commandments- and summed up in the two commandments. As you get into the full expression of the Law you find yourself in **Leviticus** here, and here is the Law of God as it applies to the woman who has just birthed a child.

So the Lord talks to Moses and He says, *"Tell everybody in Israel when a woman gives birth and bears a male, then she shall be unclean for seven days."* So this is a ceremonial kind of uncleanness. This is indicative of the fact that she is set apart from the Temple. She can't go to the Temple during this time and she can't even touch anything that's sacred or holy.

Now we have to understand that women were having babies all the time and this was a very joyous moment, and a very wonderful time to remind the people that they were still sinful- that the woman was sinful and that through her husband- they had produced a sinful child. So the child was circumcised in the case of a boy- reminding them that sin is going to pass to the next generation. So everything that happened in their life under the Law had these kinds of things attached to it- to keep throwing in their face the sinfulness of sin and to relentlessly drive them to the place of repentance where they would fall on their face before God in desperation and seek His Mercy.

And so the woman had to go through this. She was set apart from worship for a seven-day period- as in the days of her impurity or her sickness. Like the time of menstruation. God used menstruation as a symbol of uncleanness, also, and so this would be similar to that. She had a seven-day period when she was ceremonially unclean. And on the eighth day- according to **Leviticus 12:3**- that's when the circumcision took place- which was another symbol of the need for purification.

And then after the eighth day- the woman would remain in the blood of her purification for 33 days. So there's a certain impurity that she bears for 33 days. And she shouldn't touch any consecrated thing, or even enter the Sanctuary until the days of her purification were completed.

So for 40 days- this woman- having just had the greatest event in a woman's life- she had just given birth to a child- not just a child but a male child- which means she can perpetuate the family- that there's a son to pass the estate on to. And this is all wonderful and there is a

celebration and laughter and music and rejoicing because there's a future through this son- there's a progeny there. And so this great joy of a mother with all of its richness is immediately struck after seven-days of joy- you're immediately faced with the fact that the child is sinful- and so the mother for 40 days carries on a disassociation with the holy things of the temple sanctuary, and so she's reminded again that even in the time of her greatest joy and the highest privilege of humanity which is to produce a life- the mother is still aware that she needs purification. And by all rights she could be cut off from a holy God and she has no access to God at all.

And in verse 5 it says if she bears a female child- she shall be unclean for two weeks, similar to her time of the month and remain in the blood of her purification 66 days. So if you have a girl, you're unclean for 80 days. Now some people have really gotten carried away with this verse over the centuries and they make disparaging judgments on the quality of women in general. But that is a perversion of what God is saying here.

But I'm certainly not doing that because that is not the intent of what God is teaching here. But then if that is not what God is saying here- then why does it get doubled if you have a girl? There are two possible answers and maybe both are part of the answer, but the Scripture doesn't tell us. So let me just share with you what the two possible answers are.

Answer number one, if a male child was born, there were two immediate dramatic indications of sin. One was the 40 day purification of the mother, the other was the circumcision of the son. But in the event of a birth of the woman, the birth of a girl, there was no circumcision. So it may well be that for the sake of emphasis- the Lord chose another forty days to sort of make up for the symbol of circumcision by adding another 40 days of impurity to the woman. So if you had a girl you really were cut off from association with the holy things and with the temple for 80 days. Now that is a long time, that's nearly nine months when you would have fellowship with the people and all that, but then for 80 days you couldn't go to the court of the women, and you couldn't go and engage yourself in the worship. You were sort of stuck there for 80 days.

Now some have even taught that women had to abstain from relationships with their husbands, but that is absurd because that's not

the intent of this passage either. This is simply saying that you have to realize that sin has cut you off from God. And that was the situation.

Now the second possibility is because women- even under God- did bear a certain stigma because it was Eve who led the human race into sin by her deception. And the woman would be- according to the words of **1Timothy 2:14&15**, delivered from that stigma by childbearing. The woman, Eve, led the human race into sin. So a woman can have a child and raise that child in a godly way and be saved or delivered from that stigma by rearing a godly child according to **1Timothy 2**.

Now perhaps because of that stigma of having led the human race into sin, there's an extra 40 days tacked on by bearing a female child. Now you can take either of those choices, but I lean toward the fact that the extra 40 days of purification takes the place of the circumcision that can't be done to the female child, and so God allowed for this to emphasize the sinfulness of sin.

Now back to **Luke 2**. So Mary has had a male child and 40 days have passed and she's now ready for her purification. And she's already done the circumcision and it's 33 days later. So she goes back to the Temple for the time of purification. So Mary comes their purification- and the word "THEIR" is used simply because the little family comes together. And they're a part of this, too, because it's changed their life as well as changed Mary's. And obviously Joseph is impacted by this 40 days of Mary's impurity, and so they're all together coming to the Temple for this wonderful occasion of her purification. All three of them are there. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus

At the time they come, they come according to the Law of Moses, I just read it to you in **Leviticus 12**, they also brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. Now they didn't have to do that. Well, certainly they would bring Him. She is nursing Him at this time, this is just 40 days after He's born, He's a month and ten days old and they would have brought the little fella along. But you didn't have to bring Him to the Temple in Jerusalem to present Him to God. You did have to present Him to God, however. Look at **Luke 2:23**, as it is written **in the Law of the Lord**, again you see the great devotion that they both have to the Law of the Lord and they came and brought Him to present Him to the Lord, because it's written in the Law of the Lord, **“EVERY firstborn MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD”**. And that comes from **Exodus 13**.

In **Exodus 13** God said, “**Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me**

Now just what does that mean? Well it didn't mean the priesthood because you couldn't be a priest unless you were in the tribe of Levi. And both Mary and Joseph are related to King David- who was of the tribe of Judah. And so, this is not presenting the first born male to be a priest- but rather to take this child and just devote his life to God - to just give him to the Lord. That's what was done with the firstborn. And the classic Old Testament illustration of that was Hannah and she brought her son, Samuel, to give him to the Lord.

Well, every firstborn was to be devoted to the Lord, it was just that you said...*"This child, Lord, is Your child, whatever You want to do in this child's life I'm devoting this child to You...You do with this child whatever You will, whatever way You want this child to honor You and glorify You and serve You, I give You this child, the firstborn child"*.

And this is another interesting part of the Law. There was a price that had to be paid if the child was not a Levite. And the price was five shekels. This is found in **Numbers 18:15&16**. You see, all the male children in Levi became priests and they basically ran the country. And so Israel was a country ran by priests- so it was not a democracy or a republic- Israel was a theocracy. God was the King, and the governmental senators and congressmen and representatives and everybody were priests. So they governed Israel as a theocracy. They ministered and they carried on all the work among the people. And so every child, male child, born to Levi in the Levitical tribe automatically became priests. But all the rest of the tribes were freed from priestly duty. But in order to be freed from priestly duty- they had to be ransomed, or redeemed. In other words, instead of giving your son into priestly duty- you gave five shekels to support those who already were in the priesthood. And this payment is actually called a ransom or a redeeming price.

Interesting then what Joseph and Mary would have done. They would have come to the temple and according to the law they were to offer their firstborn to God. They did not have to go to the temple to do that, that was not required that they go there to do that. In fact, that is over and above, that is over and above like Hannah did over and above when she brought Samuel. But, you see, they know who they've got in

their arms there. This is not just another child. They could have said, *"This child is going to be devoted to the Lord. Lord, we're giving Him to You."* They could have said that the night He was born in Bethlehem, so they didn't need to go to the Temple to say that. They could have paid their five shekel redemption tax and taken care of that to a priest who would be an agent of the government in Bethlehem. They didn't have to go to the Temple to do that. But they go beyond what would be required because they know they've got a Child Who in a very special way does not all belong to them, and Joseph knows He doesn't belong to him, for sure. This is God. This is the Son of God. This is the Son of the Most High God. This is the God of the universe in a human body. This...

So the mystery and wonder of all of this must have been literally overwhelming to them 24 hours a day. But they know what they have there and they bring this little baby with them. And Mary's coming because she has to come because it's her forty-day purification and, of course, she's bringing the little child along, nursing the child. And she comes in and she can only go as far in as the Court of the Women, and so she's coming in and Joseph is there with her. And they go beyond what they need to do and they come with the little child, I think, ready to offer that child to the Lord in the temple because they know that this is not just like any other child. There's going to be some kind of little ceremony they're going to do there. And no doubt their saying something like, *"Lord, if ever there was a Child Who belonged to You- it's this Child. If ever there was a unique child to be uniquely presented back to You- it's this child. So accomplish Your Will in the Child's life, Oh God"*.

And so, in verse 23- they did exactly what the Law said. Anytime the womb opens and a male comes out- he's to be called holy to the Lord; he is to be separate to the Lord; he belongs to the Lord. And this was their firstborn- **Luke 2:7** says that Jesus was her firstborn. So this presentation was done and it involved a redemption- and Levi's family were required to give their sons for a priestly duty and all the rest were redeemed out of that priestly responsibility by five shekels of silver.

Now five shekels is a lot. That would have been equivalent to many days' wages back then. And you've got to remember that neither Joseph nor Mary is wealthy. Now they're not completely destitute but they're certainly not wealthy and several days wages when they

probably exhausted a lot of the money they had when they first came down there to Bethlehem to register for taxation, and then they've been there and had a baby, and now over a month has passed and they're still down there and they haven't gone back to have a livelihood, and now they had to come up with the five shekels?

Now it is interesting to think about the fact that even the Redeemer was redeemed? Even Jesus went through a picture of redemption. Isn't that wonderful? I mean, He fulfilled everything to the letter of the Law. He didn't need to have a symbol on His own body of the cleansing of sin as if He were a sinner. He didn't need to be baptized by John as if He somehow needed to be cleansed. And He certainly didn't need a Redeemer- He was the Redeemer- but He went through all the pictures because He fulfilled the Law to the very letter. And He fulfilled the Law so that by fulfilling it- He would have a fully righteous life in perfect duty- fulfilling every feature of God's Law that might be credited to our account. And that's what God does in the transaction of Justification.

Now how much did Mary and Joseph know? This whole thing is unfolding and one of the wonderful things about this chapter as we march through to verse 52 is that the whole thing begins to dawn on them. The Sun of righteousness is rising and at first they can see a little glimpse and as the Sun of righteousness gets higher and higher in the sky- the whole thing is just absolutely astonishing to them.

So they did more than the Law required. The Law didn't require that they bring the baby and offer the baby to God in any unique way- but they did that. So they were very devout and righteous and godly parents.

Now back to the sacrifice that Mary had to offer for her purification. **Luke 2:23** is an interlude, a little parenthetical statement and most Bibles have parenthesis there. But she came not only to bring the child and offer Him to the Lord as a firstborn, and to redeem Him, and even more, do it at the temple, but she came necessarily because she had to offer the sacrifice for purification. At the end of the 40 days she's got to come and make a sacrifice. Now stop right here.

Did you see what this all did? Here's this woman, she has a baby and immediately she is squarely faced with the fact that she has just produced a sinner. The circumcision of any Jewish mother's baby was an indication that sin was continuing to be passed on, except in the case

of Jesus, of course. And the next thing, she had 40 days when she couldn't go to the temple, she couldn't touch anything sacred or holy, she was ceremonially unclean and she's facing her sinfulness. And the only way she can end that is by offering a sacrifice. And God was saying in another way, the only answer to your sin and your alienation from God, and what separates you from God is a sacrifice. And all of this is picturing the final sacrifice. And when the final sacrifice was offered on the cross, what happened to the veil in the temple that separated men from God? It was ripped from top to bottom, and the way to God was opened because the final sacrifice was made and never again was there any such thing as ceremonial uncleanness. And so, now in the New Covenant God says, "*Draw near to Me...draw near to Me.*" In the Old Covenant God said, "*Stay back, keep your distance until blood has been shed.*" In the New Covenant He says *blood has been shed, come on.*

So she's got to make a sacrifice. You can see if you understand the whole culture, that this stuff dominates their lives. So here she comes and she's going to do this, sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Now you had an option there because turtledoves were migrating birds and they weren't always around. Everybody knows pigeons are always around.

Turtledoves came from spring to fall. There could be a time when you couldn't get a turtledove; never a time when you can't find a pigeon. So you had to have a sacrifice.

Now there were three levels of sacrifice. I'll do this rapidly. The first required sacrifice, let's go back to **Leviticus 12**, right where we left off in verse 6, still talking about this woman who had the baby, the male child or female. **When the days of her purification are completed ...Leviticus 12:6...**for a son or a daughter, whether it's the 40 days or 80 days, she's going to bring to the priests at the doorway of the Tent of the Meeting. She's going to come to the edge, she can't go in, she can only stay in the Court of the Women. He's going to go inside where the altar is. And she brings a lamb. Usually they could buy the lamb at the temple. We know that, Jesus cleansed the temple, you remember, because they were cheating people in the purchase of sacrificial animals. They could also...they could bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering. Two animals...burnt offering was a sin offering. Here they are, realizing Mary's going to

have to go in and say, *"I'm a sinner...I'm a sinner...I'm a sinner. I've been 40 days cut off from God."* This was the symbol of the sinner's alienation from God. *"Now a sacrifice is going to be offered in my behalf by which I'll have access to God again."* So shows us Christ in His wonderful final sacrifice.

So she comes. And she has some options. She can bring a lamb and one bird, a pigeon or a turtledove, for a sin offering. Now that was for people who had a lot of money- those who had the resources. It might be that she didn't have that much. Verse 8 says, **"But if she cannot afford a lamb, then she shall take two turtledoves or two young pigeons..."** You can just have two birds if she can't afford a lamb, one for the burnt and one for the sin offering. And the priest takes them, makes atonement for her, from then she's clean. Clean simply...doesn't mean her sins...it doesn't mean that her sins are washed away by the blood of the sacrifice, it simply means it's ceremonially if her heart is right and she's confessed those sins and asked God for forgiveness, it's depicted in that, which really was a prefiguring of the sacrifice of Christ which alone can actually take away sin.

When her sins were forgiven, this sweet believing girl, when her sins were forgiven it was because Jesus would die for them on the cross. And God already accounted that to her behalf. So she comes and she does that.

Now notice it says that she brings the birds. Now you could, according to **Numbers 5**, if you were really poor, you could bring one-tenth of an ephah and an ephah was equal to about six gallons. So one-tenth of six gallons, whatever that is, if you were really poor- so the poorest of the poor brought flour, the middle class brought birds, and the upper class brought a lamb and a bird. And so we know from these two things that first of all- Joseph and Mary weren't wealthy- but we also know that they weren't totally poor either.

Now remember they've already spent several days' wages on the five shekel redemption tax, and they are going to have to purchase birds in the temple, probably at an inflated price. But they're not so poor they bring flour.

And the second thing we know about them is they hadn't seen the wise men yet. The question always comes up in the Luke's Account, *"Where does the wise men story come in?"* because Luke doesn't tell us. We know one thing for sure, that if they had gold, frankincense and

myrrh, they would have had enough to bring a lamb and they would have been required by their own consciences devoted to God to use what they had to purchase a lamb. You know they gave the best they could give. This tells us then that the whole story of the wise men and Herod and all of that happens *after* this. And I'll explain all of that as we go through the text. But that's what we learn from what isn't there. You didn't see that here, did you? No, because it's not there.

But it's important to know when that story happened cause I know some of you are saying, "*What about the wise men, when did that come, where was that?*" Well, now you know it hasn't happened yet or they would have had the money and been required by their conscience and their wealth would have been great at that point with gold, frankincense and myrrh to provide a lamb. But they did what they were required to do.

And this is interesting- they offer a sin offering for Mary. Now Mary is confessing here that she's a sinner by offering this sacrifice. And don't ever forget this. Mary was not immaculately conceived, nor did she lead a sinless life. Mary needed a Savior. She called God her Savior, and here she offers a sacrifice for sin. She was in need of forgiveness and redemption and a substitute who would die in her place.

So this is testimony to the Person of Jesus Christ from this wonderful young couple, Joseph and Mary. They were so obedient to the Law of God- they were so devout. They named him Jesus because they were told to name Him by Gabriel, they named Him Jesus because they knew He would save His people from their sins. They come and they present Him to God. And they offer Him to God in the Temple- which they didn't have to do. And they had to give Him to God- devote Him to God.

And they did all this because they knew in a special way He belonged to the Lord. They knew that because He was the Son of the Most High.

Let's come and pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.